

MAY 4, 1978

Over on the east side of the Shortgrass Country, ladies are collecting paper feed sacks for recycling. By keeping their project private, they took in only 5000 pounds of sacks last month. Once the news spreads, those ladies are going to have a freight problem that'll make moving Boulder Dam look like a kid pulling a wagon behind his tricycle.

In our country alone, there's enough empty sacks to double wrap the pipeline running from Alaska to California. Right industrious workers could gather enough sacks off the highway right-of-ways to line the bottom of the Queen Mary. Shortgrassers have been feeding so long that water from the wells taste like cottonseed meal. Plenty of the hollow horns are showing a yellow tint in their hair.

Boys here at the ranch are raiding dogies on the bottle. It's a better shot than trying to produce milk from an old cow or an old ewe. For a little over \$10 a 25 pound bag for dry milk, you don't even have to pay the county \$2 for registering a brand.

Other than the convenience of not having to hold the bottles for so many lambs and calves, the old cows and the old ewes haven't provided much. No. 3 black cow milk range delivery, I figure, is costing about six-bits a pint. Mother ewe milk with no local nutrients added, made up entirely of trucked-in protein, costs more money. I don't think we'd of been in any worse wreck if we'd of made a deal with Tiffany's jewelry store to rent stalls for our stock.

With all these new things like artificial insemination and embryo transplants, a man with a good incubator might work out something that'd make money instead of trouble and expense. Scientists have been claiming for a long time that they were going to make the "birds and the bees" procedures as out of date as living without a credit card. The way this dry weather ranching is going, we ought to be ready to listen.

One of our neighbors says his cows are giving powdered milk, but I think he's mistaken. Foam on a nursing calf's muzzle dries fast during a drouth. I remember in that dry spell of the 50's yearlings still had a milky paste stuck on their faces. Fellow learns lots of things like that going through a drouth. Of course they tell me you can learn a lot of things hobbling around a welfare office on crutches if you'll keep your mind off your aches and pains.

Big question now is who is going to run to the market first. On this 29th day of April, the Shortgrass Country has had anywhere from little over an inch to nothing to call the spring rain. Over in Mertzon at night, the dogs can't sleep for the hombres bucking and pitching in their beds. Around the post office, the scene is so quiet that the mail clerks go outside to clear their throats.

Never are any powdered milk dairies advertised for sale. We are putting plenty of hope in the wind and dust. So far it looks like the lady sack gathers are going to be the busiest of all.